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AUTHOR Davey, Lynn F.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the degree of agreement between adolescents' and parents' perceptions of the adolescent-parent relationship, and the links between these perceptions and adolescents' school achievement and personal autonomy. Questionnaires were completed by 353 adolescents attending an all-male, inner city, Catholic high school, and by their parents. The questionnaires assessed the parents' and adolescents' perceptions of the closeness and amount of communication in their relationship, parents' knowledge of their son's activities, and the distribution of decision making in the family. Outcome measures were individuation, or parents' and sons' connectedness or separateness in their relationship; deviance, or the degree to which the sons had gotten into trouble at school; and sons' scholastic achievement. Results concerning individuation indicated that the more the sons perceived their relationship to their parents as constructive, the more autonomous the sons were; and sons' and parents' perceptions of their closeness were related to the parents' individuation. Results relating to deviance showed that sons who did not feel close to their parents and who believed their parents knew little about their activities had more discipline problems in school than other adolescents. Results concerning achievement indicated that sons who perceived a closeness to their parents and who perceived themselves to be in control of decision making exhibited greater school achievement than other adolescents. (ME)

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Developmental Implications of Shared and Divergent Perceptions in the Parent-Adolescence Relationship

Lynn F. Davey

St. Joseph's College, Maine

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Paper presented at the 60th Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, LA, March 25-28, 1993.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Lynn Davey, Department of Psychology, St. Joseph's College, Windham, ME 04062.

Adolescence has long been regarded as a period of storm and stress characterized by emancipation from parental ties and emotional disengagement from the family (Blos, 1967; A. Freud, 1958). There is a small but growing literature which presents an alternative emphasis regarding the nature of the family context during adolescence. For example, rather than considering parents as obstacles to adolescents' maturation, these theorists view adolescent independence and autonomy as fostered by parents (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The premise is that adolescence, for most children, is better conceived as a period of increasing self-governance that unfolds within a framework of continued emotional connectedness to the family. As externally imposed limits are renegotiated between parent and adolescent, they become internalized in the adolescent and, in that process, long-standing emotional connections to parents are reinforced.

Family theorists have underscored the adaptive significance of cohesiveness in family functioning, as well as ways in which families organize and maintain themselves as social units (Reiss, 1981). Among these means of organization, the achievement of consistency in beliefs that regulate interpersonal behavior and family functioning are thought to be particularly important. Despite these suggestions, however, only a few studies have investigated the extent to which family members share views about family relationships (e.g. Alessandri & Wozniak, 1989; 1991; Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Cashmore & Goodnow, 1985;

Feldman & Gehring, 1989). Even within this small inventory, central are issues of definition and statistical consequences of different theoretical orientation and methods of data analysis.

For example, a perspective that addresses social-cognitive process in adolescence has been described by Cashmore and Goodnow (1985). These authors identify three key terms for distinguishing different types of adolescent-parent agreement. These are (1) "actual agreement," which is the agreement between adolescents' positions and views, and those of parents; (2) "accuracy of perceptions," referring to the match between parents' actual perceptions and the appraisals adolescents think their parents would give; and (3) "perceived agreement," which is the match between responses that adolescents give for themselves and for their parents.

Alessandri and Wozniak offer three primary agreement measures to be considered when exploring congruency between adolescents' and parents' beliefs: (1) agreement between parents' beliefs and their adolescents' self-beliefs; (2) agreement between parents' beliefs and the beliefs that adolescents have about parents' beliefs; and (3) agreement between adolescents' self-beliefs and the adolescents' beliefs about parental beliefs. These authors found that mothers' and fathers' beliefs about actions their adolescents would take in hypothetical situations were congruent with the adolescents' own beliefs.

Feldman et al. (1989) used a non-verbal task in which the

parents and adolescents independently placed markers on a checkerboard to indicate cohesion and power among family members. They defined shared views, or congruence, as similarity in parents' and adolescents' physical placement of the markers. This quite different assessment generated results and interpretations comparable to previous studies.

Carlson, Cooper, and Spradling (1991) adopt a family systems perspective in the study of congruence in family members' perspectives regarding their families. The authors used the Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos & Moss, 1986) to assess the whole family environment and the Family Assessment Measure (FAM III) to assess perceptions of dyads in the family. In addition, adolescents completed a self-report measure of perceived competence, including social, athletic, and scholastic competence.

While all of these studies deal with agreement relative to parent-adolescent relations, it is important to distinguish between the different levels and directions of perceptual understanding of relationships in this literature. All of these studies do, however, demonstrate the trend toward a relational emphasis, and away from correlational studies of adolescent characteristics and concurrent measures of parental attitudes. These studies underscore the need for a more differentiated picture of parental and adolescent perceptions, and of the implications of perceptual mutuality, or lack thereof, for both individual development and the parent-adolescent

relationship.

The implications of shared perceptions are unclear because the small empirical literature is not grounded in a unified theory from which to predict behavioral outcomes. Specific effects of shared or divergent perceptions of relationship may depend on domain (Jessop, 1982); both shared and divergent views may be healthy, as in the interplay of individuality and connectedness within the family (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). For example, divergence in family members' beliefs or values may suggest that normative socialization patterns are not occurring. However, divergence between parents and adolescents may be a short-term phenomenon, with limited implications for long-term socialization patterns. Furthermore, discrepancies may be more likely during times of extreme developmental change, such as the transition to adolescence, where preexisting expectations and behavior patterns change in the child, in the parents' perception of the child, and the parenting role in general (Collins, 1990). Future research must try to delineate the implications of divergence for both socialization issues and individual development.

The present study represents the first to investigate links between shared and divergent intrafamilial perceptions and adolescent functioning. Measures of adolescent deviance, achievement, and individuation are assessed. In addition, this study assesses parents' own perceptions of their individuation from adolescents. Previous studies have analyzed individuation

from the adolescent viewpoint alone (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), or from a score representing a composite of parent and adolescent views (Desantis, 1990).

Individuation

Individuation is similar to identity formation in that the consequence is an autonomous individual with a unique identity. Individuation was initially used in reference to the mother-infant relationship, where the term described children around two years of age who were beginning to assert their independence from parents (Kaplan, 1978).

Grotevant and Cooper adopted this idea and applied it to adolescence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). This perspective asserts that adolescents seek to become independent while remaining connected to their parents. The adolescent's identity has been constituted through the parent-child relationship; to dissolve the relationship may impair the adolescent's concept of self. The traditional parent-child pattern, however, becomes inappropriate with increasing age and experience. Parents and adolescents use the connectedness between them to provide a secure base from which the adolescents explore their individuality. This enables adolescents to transform, rather than sever, their relationship with parents.

Deviance

There is strong evidence of the significance of the parent-child relationship in the etiology of deviance. The relationship between parental rejection, defined as the absence of warmth and

affection by parents, remains powerful even after controlling for the effects of other family factors such as socioeconomic status (Simons, Robertson, & Downs, 1989). Although the findings seem consistent, most evidence is based on data collected from children alone. There is a significant need for studies to explore the relationship between child and parent ratings of perceived or actual behavior.

Achievement

A review of the literature on family effects and school achievement indicates significant effects of parental involvement. Parental involvement represents, for example, expectations for school performance, verbal encouragement and reinforcement regarding school work, and general academic guidance. Recently, researchers have suggested that particular characteristics of the parent child relationship may influence the child's achievement (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Coleman, 1961, 1987; Hanson & Ginsburg, 1988). This research is found in the sociological and educational literature, however. To date, there is little mention of the effects of parent-child relationship on school achievement in the psychological literature.

This study hopes to contribute to the knowledge of adolescence in three explicit ways. First, whereas previous studies assessed agreement in parent and child beliefs, positions, and views, the construct of agreement is clarified here by assessing perceptions of relationship directly. In other

words, instead of assessing agreement about, for example, political views, this study asked parents if they talked to their sons about a number of issues, and asked sons if they talked to their parents about the same issues. Second, previous literature has treated agreement as a unified construct; this study differentiates level of agreement. In other words, this study analyzed separately parent-son agreement that they "never" communicate and agreement that they "often" communicate. Statistical results confirmed the conceptual differences between such groups.

Third, this study explicated whether or not shared perceptions contributed above and beyond individual perceptions. The major hypothesis is that both shared and divergent perceptions within the family are expected and normative characteristics of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Method

Subjects

The sample was limited to 353 pairs of parents and their sons from an all male, inner-city, Catholic high school. Seventy-five percent of the families were Caucasian; the mean level of formal education attained was 15 years. Duncan's Socio-Economic Index was used to assess parents' occupational level; the majority of family were mid-level professionals (Duncan, 1977).

Procedure

Parents and sons completed surveys that measured

psychological aspects of their relationship. Items were drawn from the High School and Beyond study (National Center for Education Statistics, 1983). The student questionnaires were completed in each grade's required English class. About one month later, parent surveys were mailed home. All parent questionnaires contained a family code so as to match parents with their sons. The anonymity of all participants was protected by use of these codes.

Measures

Computation:

For the following measures of parent-adolescent relationship, separate scores were computed to represent: the sons' perception, the parents' perception, and the level of agreement. The scores which represent individual perception are simply mean scores across all items of the measure. For example, sons' perception of Communication represents the sons' mean score across all Communication items. Decision Making was a categorical variable, and was dummy coded to permit parametric analyses.

Each pair received scores reflecting level of agreement, or instances in which the parent and son offered identical responses to a particular question. Each measure (i.e. Closeness, Communication) constituted a number of items with Likert-type response categories. The Closeness items, for example, contained four response categories: "false", "usually false", "usually true", and "true." Each pair received four agreement scores

representing the number of items they both answered "false", the number of items they both answered "usually false", the number of items they both answered "usually true", and the number of items they both answered "true" across all items of the measure. Thus, each score represents a scale from zero to total agreement across items.

Separate disagreement scores were computed at the item level of each measure. However, the level of agreement scores noted above were scales, and thus sufficiently represented both shared and divergent perceptions. The individual disagreement scores were computed in order to perform the final discriminant function analyses which assessed extreme groups of agreement and disagreement.

Closeness

Parents and sons were presented with Likert scale items designed to obtain information about their respective perceptions of closeness. Separate factor analyses were run on parent and son data; in both cases, a single factor was extracted and comprised corresponding items. Sons were asked to "Circle how true each of the following statements is for you and your parents:". Parents were asked to "Circle how true each of the following statements is for you and your son:". Response categories ranged from 1 to 4, "false", "usually false", "usually true", or "true". Internal consistency using the Spearman-Brown average inter-item formula was .94 for both parent and son scales. Items from the student survey were the following:

1. My parents trust me to do what they expect without checking up on me.
2. I know WHY I am supposed to do what my parents tell me to do.
3. I count on my parents to help me solve many of my problems.
4. I get along well with my parents.
5. I think that I will be a source of pride to my parents in the future.
6. My parents treat me fairly.
7. My parents are easy to talk to.
8. I feel close to my parents.

Communication

Seven items comprised the communication scale, which represented how often parents and sons talk about different topics. Sons were asked to "Circle how often you talk to your parents about the following:". Parents were asked to "Circle how often you talk to your son about the following:". Response categories ranged from 1 to 4, "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often". Internal consistency using the Spearman-Brown average inter-item formula was .94 for both parent and son scales. Items from the student survey were the following:

1. Jobs and careers
2. Information or help about alcohol
3. Information or help about drugs
4. College or your future
5. Girlfriends or social life
6. Your personal concerns
7. Friends

Knowledge of Sons' Activities

The knowledge of sons' Activities scale consisted of eight items relating to how much parents know about different aspects of their sons' Activities. Sons were asked to "Circle how much your parents know about:". Parents were asked to "Circle how much you know about:". Response categories ranged from 1 to 3,

"nothing", "something", "a lot". Internal consistency using the Spearman-Brown average inter-item formula was .93 for the parent scale, and .94 for the son scale. Items from the student survey were:

1. Who your friends are?
2. Your friend's parents?
3. Where you go at night?
4. How you spend your money?
5. Your school Activities?
6. What you do in your free time?
7. Where you are afternoons after school?

Decision Making

The decision making scale comprised eight items relating to who in the family makes decisions about a variety of topics. Sons were asked "Who in your family makes most of the decisions in each of the following areas? Circle:

1. My parents decide by themselves
2. My parents decide after discussion with me
3. My parents and I decide together
4. I decide after discussion with my parents
5. I decide myself"

Internal consistency using the Spearman-Brown average inter-item formula was .91 for the son scale. Items from the student survey were the following:

1. How late I can stay out
2. Which friends I can spend time with
3. How I can spend my money
4. Whether I can date
5. Who I can date
6. Whether I can have a job
7. Whether I should go to college
8. Where I should go to college

Decision Making is a categorical variable, and was thus

dummy coded in order to compute sons' and parents' perceptions of decision making; scores of "0" represent those who perceive decisions are made mostly by the parent or mutually, and scores of "1" represent those who perceive decisions are made mostly by the son. For example, a positive relation between a son's perception of Decision Making and Individuation would indicate that sons who claim to be in control of decisions have higher Individuation scores.

To compute the agreement scores for the Decision Making measure, responses were collapsed into 3 categories: responses of 1 or 2 were collapsed into a single category of "mostly parent"; response category 3 represents "mutually"; responses of 4 or 5 were collapsed into a single category of "mostly son".

Three different types of functioning were selected as outcome measures: Individuation, Deviance, and Achievement. This study offers a unique perspective of individuation because parents' estimates of individuation in the relationship is assessed as well as adolescents' estimates. Previous studies have analyzed individuation from the adolescent viewpoint alone (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), or from a score representing a composite of parent and adolescent views (DeSantis, 1990). Second, the study assessed adolescents' estimates of their own deviant behavior. Third, a more objective measure of adolescent functioning, self-report grade point average, was assessed. The adolescents had received their grades and cumulative grade-point

averages in the mail one week prior to this survey's administration.

Individuation

The parent and adolescent questionnaires included items on subjects' perceptions of their interactions on caring, and expressing ideas and opinions. The scale was constructed by DeSantis (1990) to assess the Connectedness and Separateness features of the Individuation construct. The scale consists of four items, two which reflect Connectedness and two which reflect Separateness. Subjects responded on a 5 point Likert scale to indicate the accuracy with which each statement described their relationship. Response categories ranged from 1 to 5, "not at all", "not very much", "somewhat", "pretty much", and "very much." The estimated corrected reliability was .93.

The Connectedness items were:

1. How much do you care about what your parent (son) thinks of you?
2. How much do you think your parent (son) cares about what your think of him/her?

The Separateness items were:

1. How much do you like it when your parent (son) expresses ideas and opinions that are different from yours?
2. How much do you think your parent (son) likes it when you express ideas and opinions that are different from his/hers?

Deviance

A deviance scale was derived from a factor analysis of 8 self-report items of various behaviors. Students were instructed to "Circle how often you have experienced these things this

year." Responses of 1 to 4 indicated "never", "rarely", "sometimes", or "often". The estimated corrected reliability was .93. The deviance items were as follows:

1. Another student got me in trouble.
2. I cheated on a test.
3. A teacher blamed me for something.
4. The teacher did not believe my excuse.

Achievement

The week before the questionnaires were administered, students received mid-term grades, and cumulative grade-point average. Students reported their own grade-point averages, which ranged from 1.0 to 4.0, corresponding from "D" to "A" letter grades, respectively.

Method of Analysis

The primary goal of this study was to explicate the relative influence of individual, shared, and divergent perceptions on individual functioning. A heuristic model was created as a guideline for these analyses (see Figure 1); the figure illustrates the way individual functioning may be influenced by several factors: family characteristics, individual perceptions, and level of agreement. Stepwise multiple regression procedures were utilized to find the best predictors of Individuation, Deviance, and Achievement. Independent variables for each equation were individual perceptions and levels of agreement. Socioeconomic status, sons' age, and parents' relation to son were used as controls in all analyses. All control variables were entered as one block in the first step of the regression

equations; individual perceptions were entered as one block in the second step of the regression equation; finally, levels of agreement on all variables were entered as one block in the third step of the regression equation.

Results indicate that the particular effects of individual, shared, and divergent perceptions differ by domain of functioning assessed. The specific effects will be discussed in the following sections.

Results

The following effects were found for the measure of Individuation. Sons' perceptions of Closeness, Communication, and Parents' Knowledge of his Activities were significantly and positively related to adolescent's Individuation. Neither controls or agreement on any variable produced significant effects. Individual perceptions accounted for 39% of the variance in Sons' Individuation. In other words, sons who perceived a more constructive relationship with parents were more individuated.

In terms of Parents' Individuation status, the following effects were found: Sons' and parents' perceptions of Closeness were positively related to parents' Individuation, while "never/rarely" and "sometimes" agreement on Communication were negatively related to parents' Individuation. Controls did not account for a significant amount of the variance in Individuation. Individual perceptions accounted for 24% of the variance, with agreement variables contributing only .02%. Thus,

the total variance in Parents' Individuation explained by this model was 26%.

The following effects were found for the measure of Deviance. Sons' perception of Closeness and Parents' Knowledge of his Activities, parents' perception of Communication, and parent-son agreement that they only "sometimes" communicate were negatively related to Deviance. In other words, the more deviant sons were those who felt less close to parents, who believed parents knew little about their activities, who agreed with parents that they only sometimes communicate, and whose parents perceive less communication. Controls accounted for only .01% of the variance in Deviance; individual perceptions accounted for 12%; agreement variables contributed another .05%. Thus, the total variance in Deviance explained by this model was .18%.

The following effects were found for the measure of Achievement. Both indicators of socioeconomic status were positively related to achievement, such that higher SES was associated with higher adolescent achievement. Controls accounted for .08% of the variance in Achievement. Further, specific aspects of the relationship were found to be associated with achievement. Sons' perceptions of Closeness, and Decision Making, and agreement about Parents' Knowledge of Sons' Activities were associated with achievement. Specifically, higher achieving sons were those who perceived greater closeness to parents, who perceived themselves to be in control of decision making, and who agreed with parents that parents knew a lot about

the sons' activities. Individual perceptions accounted for an additional 11% of the variance, and agreement variables contributed .04%. Thus, the total variance in Achievement explained by this model was .23%.

Discussion

Individuation

As measured, Individuation from parents during the adolescent period was expected to increase with age, as an indication of the transformation of the parent-adolescent relationship (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). As indicated by these data, however, the scale was insensitive to age. These data highlight the distinction between development and age per se; the Individuation measure is a developmental construct even though it was unaffected by age because it was affected by changes and differences in parent-adolescent relationships. This view suggests that a 14-year-old could be at a higher individuation level than an 18-year-old depending on how the parents of the 14- and 18-year-olds interact with their adolescents.

Sons' Estimates of Individuation

Relationship with parents, including whether adolescents and parents were in agreement about how they perceived their relationship, was a factor that accounted for differences in adolescent individuation levels. Specifically, more individuated sons were those who claimed to feel close to parents, to communicate, and who perceived parents to be quite knowledgeable

about their activities. These results are in accord with a previous study (DeSantis, 1990) that found perceived closeness to be necessary for adolescent individuation.

Parents' Estimates of Individuation

This study assessed parents' own perceptions of the individuation in the parent-adolescent relationship. Results suggest that parents' and sons' perceptions of closeness, as well as agreement about communication, predicted parents' individuation. These factors predicting parents' assessment of individuation are different from those found with adolescents' estimates.

Including parent estimates confirms that a level of closeness and communication with one another may be necessary for the parent-adolescent relationship to individuate. However, whereas sons' own perception of communication predicted sons' individuation, agreement about communication was salient for parents' individuation. In other words, parents who reported highly individuated relationships were those who agreed with sons that they communicated.

Previous studies have suggested that in order for adolescents to be able to work at psychological separation from their parents, they need to maintain a "connected" relationship with them (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; DeSantis, 1990). Data from adolescents in the present study supports this notion. Specifically, when adolescents view their relationship with parents as close and communicative, they are likely to develop

concepts of the other as a unique person in his or her own right. The data from parents is also significant in this regard. Others have speculated that adolescent individuation implies that parents are reciprocating with efforts that enable adolescents to advance their individuality and separateness (see DeSantis, 1990; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Deviance

The analyses of the relationship variables and adolescents' reported deviance show that the adolescents' psychological relationship with parents is an important factor. Work in social control theory (LaCoste, 1985; LeCroy, 1988) has demonstrated how lower social conformity can be associated with poor communication and interaction between adolescents and parents. In the present study, adolescents who perceived greater closeness, communication, and parental knowledge of activities less frequently engaged in deviant behavior. Additionally, less deviant sons had parents who perceived greater communication in their relationship. Finally, less deviant sons generally agreed with parents that they communicated. Lower deviance was, thus, associated with aspects of individual and shared perceptions of the parent-adolescent relationship. This is an important finding because it introduces reports from parents and sustains previous reports of the significance of parent-child relationship in the etiology of deviance (see Simons, Robertson, & Downs, 1989).

Achievement

The associations found between relational effects and

student achievement are significant for a number of reasons. First, Coleman has suggested that schools are more effective for students from strong family backgrounds than for those from weak ones; however, there are few empirical studies that present data explicating the process of the formation of "social capital." Coleman notes the importance of the interaction between the resources devoted by the family, and the resources provided by the school. The present sample represents a very homogeneous group of families; upper-middle class parents, with high educational attainment, who have sent their sons to a parochial high school, and who report high levels of closeness and communication and knowledge of the son's activities. Even within this characteristically similar sample, differences are still found between socioeconomic status and achievement; specifically, higher achievement was associated with higher socioeconomic status. Furthermore, significant associations were found between achievement and parent-adolescent relationship characteristics. For example, higher achieving sons were those who perceived that they controlled decisions, who perceived greater closeness to parents, and who agreed with parents that parents knew "a lot" about the son's activities.

Coleman proposes that the concept of social capital is integral in the study of school outcomes. He suggests that in a family setting, social capital is developed through interactions that transmit norms, values, expectations, and cultural knowledge. These data are in line with other studies that have

described some of the processes that encourage the creation of social capital such as regular communication, discussion of values and behavior, conflict resolution strategies, and actions that generate feelings of closeness and respect (Seginer, 1983; Youniss, 1989). Data from the present study may serve as the first step toward explicating the process of social capital formation by looking at the direct influence of relational characteristics on student achievement.

Secondly, this study contributes to the evolving literature on the family and school outcomes. Whereas many previous studies focused on, for example, parental expectations of achievement (Hess & Holloway, 1984), and effects of parental discipline and control (Baumrind, 1973; Dornbusch, et al., 1987), the present study establishes links between relational characteristics and achievement.

Methodological Features and Caveats

A few issues related to sampling and measurement should be noted. First, some characteristics inherent to both the present sample and to the measures used may have attenuated relationships among variables of interest or may have masked relationships that may actually be present. Although the study utilized data from a large number of parent-son pairs (N=353 pairs), the sample was not very diverse with regard to social class or family structure. The sample was restricted to a homogeneous group of mostly Caucasian, upper-middle-class volunteer families.

Second, it should be noted, and is evident in Table 1, that

although certain measures of agreement were correlated with certain outcome measures, the set of agreement variables failed to explain a significant amount of the variance in any of the outcome measures. This may be related to the design of the study; levels of agreement were entered as the third block in the model. Had levels of agreement been entered second, or in exclusion of individual perceptions, bigger effects may have been noted. This also may be related to the sample; these pairs of parents and sons had unusually high agreement levels. These data suggest that on the whole, shared perceptions do not contribute unique information above and beyond that explained by individual perceptions alone. The influence of shared perceptions may be significantly different in a more variant sample.

Third, there is a general criticism that youths offer more biased or socially influenced perceptions in self-report data; in this sample, however, parents' scores were universally higher and less variable than sons'. This finding presents a dilemma: parents say they talk to their adolescents about virtually everything, while adolescents' reports are more variable. The question becomes "Who is right?". The answer is that they are both right. These findings are limited to parents' and adolescents' perceptions of the family. By perceptions I refer to the complex interpretations of family relationships that constitute an individual's subjective reality. Accordingly, each family member is likely to construct a somewhat different view of the family, based on such factors as age, experience, and

personality. We should not assume that perceptions are totally veridical and closely correspond to actual family behavior. Nor should we assume that family perceptions are unrelated to family patterns; parents' and adolescents' representations and objectively assessed family interactions are separate but presumably overlapping sources of information, both worthy of further study.

Fourth, the numerous scales constructed in this study are in themselves important findings given that there are few, if any, paper-pencil measures of the Grotevant and Cooper, or Youniss and Smollar models conceptualizing the relationship between parents and children during adolescence. In particular, the measures of individuation allowed assessment of both parents' and adolescents' perceptions of individuation in their relationship. Clearly there is a deficit of work which operationalizes individuation as a developmental construct from relational perceptions.

Summary and Conclusions

The present study clarifies the role of parent-adolescent relationship in adolescent development. Specifically, this study is a significant step toward further specification of intrafamilial perceptions during adolescence. The author has undertaken analyses of similarities and differences between parent and adolescent reports regarding the family and has used these shared and divergent perceptions as psychological variables. Furthermore, this study is a step away from the

unilateral emphasis on conflict and pubertal change in the developmental literature on families with adolescents, although the historical sources for this work and for the family conflict literature are quite similar.

There is a view that developmental tasks during adolescence are accomplished by severing parental ties. There is a counter view that conceptualizes development during adolescence as a renegotiation of the parent-child relationship from unilateral patterns of control toward more mutual or bilateral patterns. Although both parents and adolescents pursue the goal of eventual adolescent self-regulation, the developmental process is accomplished within the context of continuing close relationships (Cooper, Grotevant, and Condon, 1983; White, Speisman, and Costos, 1983; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

This perspective appears consistent with these data that highlight the significance of both unique and shared perceptions within healthy families. Heretofore, shared perceptions have been assumed to contribute to healthy functioning; the present data assert that the particular influence of shared perceptions depends upon domain of functioning assessed. In some instances shared perceptions do not uniquely affect outcome (e.g. adolescents' individuation). In other cases, sharing perceptions of what is happening in the relationship does influence functioning (e.g. parents' individuation, adolescent deviance and achievement).

The interp. / between unique and shared realities in the

family has previously been explored through family discourse, family interaction patterns, and family members' constructions of reality. The same interplay is evident in this study that explored perceptions of relationship held by adolescents and their parents. If development is operationalized by means of transformation in relationship, it is particularly valuable to examine how each of the members perceives the relationship.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Predictors of Individual Functioning

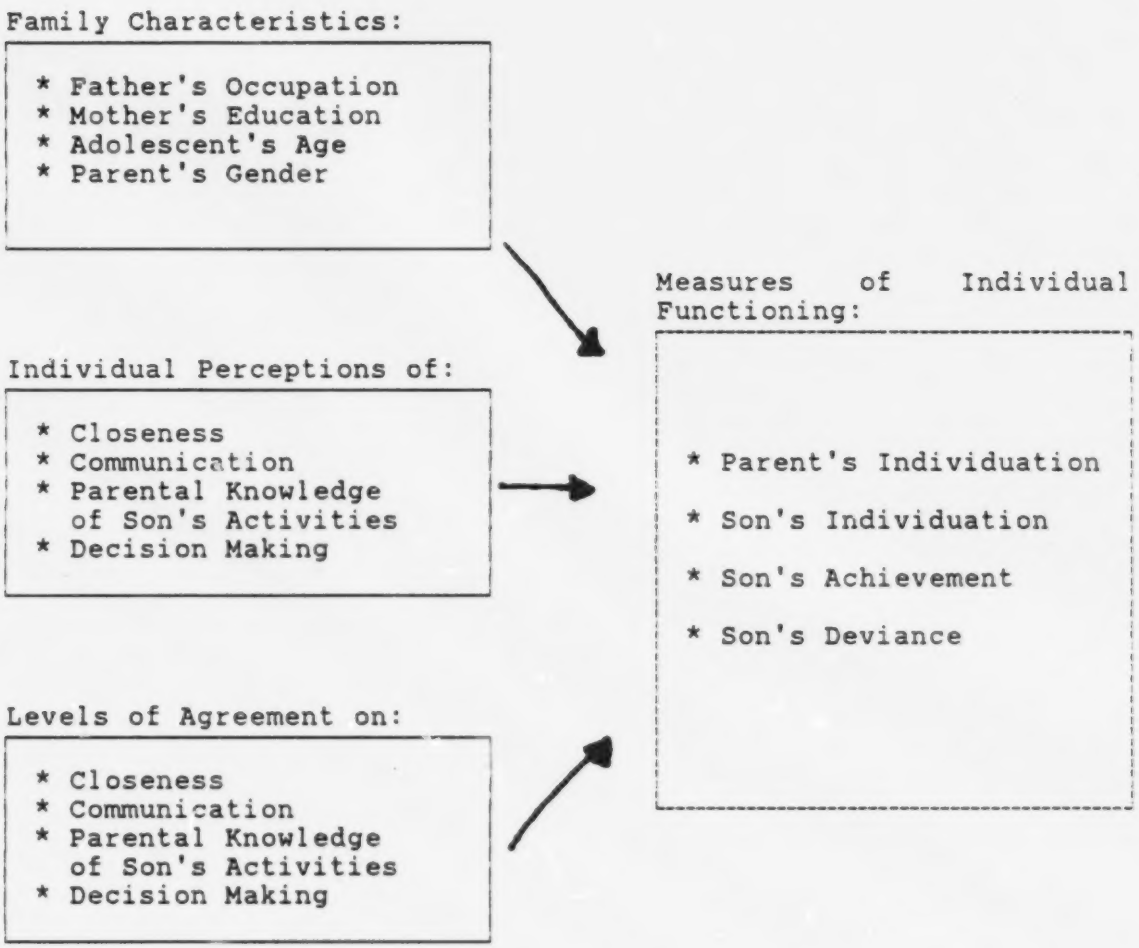

Table 1. Standardized Regression Coefficients showing the effects of Controls, Individual Perceptions, and Level of Agreement on Indicators of Individual Functioning.

	PARENTS' INDIVIDUATION	SONS' INDIVIDUATION	DEVIANCE	ACHIEVEMENT
Controls:				
Father's occupation	.004	-.008	-.022	.213*
Mother's education level	-.049	-.070	-.093	.160*
Sons' age	-.041	.012	-.014	.010
Parents' relation to son	-.012	.022	.004	-.098
R^2	.00	.01	.01	.08+
Perceptions of relationship:				
Parent: Closeness	.409*	.059	-.006	.077
Son: Closeness	.234*	.481*	-.288*	.179*
Parent: Communication	-.078	.085	-.206*	-.032
Son: Communication	.030	.179*	.050	.065
Parent: Knowledge of Sons' Activities	-.116	.004	.012	.068
Son: Parents' Knowledge of his Activities	-.187	.210*	-.225*	.089
Parent: Decision Making	-.025	-.042	.003	.019
Son: Decision Making	.082	.031	.061	-.125*
R^2 Change	.24+	.39+	.12+	.11+
Levels of Agreement:				
Closeness:				
false/usually false	.031	.034	-.111	.109
usually true	-.017	.053	-.021	-.036
true	-.076	.006	.045	.067
Communication:				
never/rarely	-.180*	.080	-.105	.019
sometimes	-.135*	.015	-.130*	.034
often	.008	-.104	.005	-.108
Parents' Knowledge of Sons' Activities:				
nothing/something	-.184	.052	-.011	-.111
a lot	.043	-.043	.122*	.203*
Decision Making:				
Mostly parent	-.024	-.016	.088	-.039
Mutual	-.035	-.077	.121	-.103
Mostly son	.059	-.020	-.120	.093
R^2 Change	.02	.01	.05	.04
Total R^2	.26	.41	.18	.23

* = t-test significant at .05 level
+ = F-test of R^2 change significant at .05 level

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